



## Thinking About Diction

*Diction is the conscious and purposeful choice of words by an author. An author's choice of words is his/her greatest tool in conveying tone and setting the mood in a text. Vivid, colorful, and purposeful vocabulary affects the reader's interpretation of a text; for example, the same situation can be described as a "challenge," or as a "problem," thus influencing the reader's perspective. In thinking about diction, it is imperative that the author carefully consider his/her purpose and audience and select words that best convey those intentions.*

### **DICTION AND SYNONYMS**

*Examine the following lists of words. For each, write a definition in your own words that conveys the connotation of each word. Once you've completed your study of all three groups, answer the questions that follow.*

#### **Group 1:**

Happy	Elated	Joyous
Cheerful	Jubilant	Jolly
Content	Merry	Delighted

#### **Group 2:**

Smart	Crafty	Resourceful
Adept	Quick	Shrewd
Brainy	Sharp	Wise

#### **Group 3:**

Angry	Furious	Outraged
Annoyed	Wrathful	Inflamed
Bitter	Ferocious	Piqued

1. Based on your study of group one, what is the most negative synonym for "happy?" Why? What is the connotation?
  
2. Study group two, and divide the words roughly in half according to their connotations. Write your two lists here and explain why you divided the words as you did.

3. Based on your study of group three, what is the most positive synonym for “angry?” Why? What is the connotation?
  
4. Summarize what you discovered about diction and connotations based on your study of these three word groups. What conclusions did you form about diction? Explain with details and support.

### **DICTION AND TONE**

*For the following activity, complete the Mad-Libs-style sentences by inserting words that convey either a negative or a positive connotation. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to help.*

**Fact:** On a sunny day, my mother asked me to weed the garden. I did it.

**Negative Perspective:**

My mother (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ me to weed the garden. Weeding is a/an (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. I felt (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ like I was (simile) \_\_\_\_\_. While I weeded, (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ me, and (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) \_\_\_\_\_. The weather was (adverb) \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_. The (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ garden looked like (simile) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Positive Perspective:**

My mother (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ me to weed the garden. Weeding is a/an (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. I felt (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ like I was (simile) \_\_\_\_\_. While I weeded, (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ me, and (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) \_\_\_\_\_. The weather was (adverb) \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_. The (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ garden looked like (simile) \_\_\_\_\_.

## ***DICTION AND MOOD***

*As further practice in diction, rewrite the following neutral story in either positive or negative terms. Select your words carefully, and do not omit any significant details. Include a title that uses diction to convey the overall mood of the story.*

On the fourth of July the Sterns hosted a day-long party for all their relatives who could come. The Stern family consisted of Aunt Flora, who did most of the cooking and organizing; Uncle Jim, who grilled the hamburgers; their eighteen-year-old son named Steve; their sixteen-year-old daughter named Andrea; their son Rich, who was nine, and their baby, Tina, who was two years old. Steve was a football player; Andrea was a cheerleader; Rich had a broken arm; Tina was teething.

One family who traveled from Milwaukee included eighteen-year-old twins, Sandra and Amanda. These shy girls liked art and writing. In fact, Amanda mostly sat on the porch and wrote in her journal. Also among the visitors were Gramma, who had forgotten her hearing aid, and Big Bernie, a cousin who owned a used-car dealership. Big Bernie was coming down with the flu.

At ten in the morning, Aunt Flora produced a large brunch. Sandra, who had offered to go buy some baby aspirin for little Tina, arrived back at the house to discover that a brunch had been served and the food was practically gone. Steve gave her a piece of French toast off his plate.

In the afternoon a water balloon fight involved most of the people until Rich broke a balloon in the house; this made Tina laugh. Aunt Flora suggested that everybody start a game of volleyball in the backyard. Uncle Jim, who actually had been a high school volleyball coach, usually refused to participate in these family games. However, toward the end of the game, Uncle Jim finally joined in and served the winning point.

After their picnic supper, everyone except Gramma walked to the town park to watch the fireworks. They noticed that Aunt Flora looked teary. At the end of a long day, the visitors loaded up their cars and headed home. This was a Fourth of July to be remembered.

